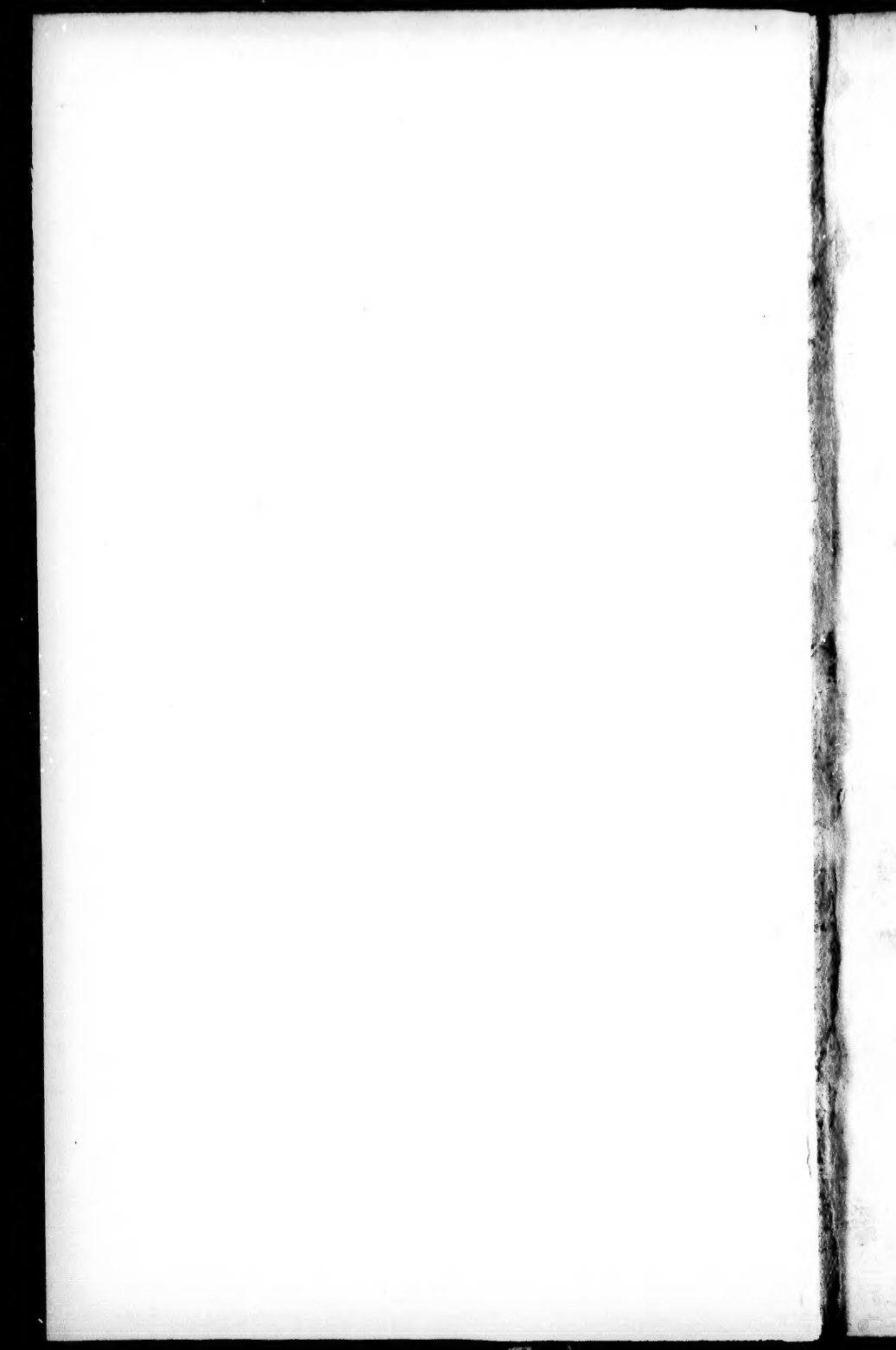




GENERAL
THOUGHTS
ON THE
Construction, Use and Abuse
OF THE
GREAT OFFICES;
WITH
A VIEW to some further DISCOURSES
on the same SUBJECT.



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General Thoughts, &c.

AS God hath imprinted his Authority on Princes, so he hath also delegated and committed Part of his Care and Providence unto them, that they may be instrumental in conveying the Blessings which he intends should be the Effects of Government.

The Prerogative of the Crown,
when exercis'd only under the Eye
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and Inspection of the Sovereign, is altogether form'd for the Benefit of the Subject, and is as diffusive of Blessings, in inspiring Mankind with Vigour and Activity, as the Sun is by its Rays of Heat in expanding, nourishing, and invigorating the vegetable Creation.

But when the Order of the great Offices, under the Inspection of the Officers of State, doth not open to the View of the Crown every Matter and Act of Importance, the wrong Frame of them will become a Snare to the Subject; occasion a servile Dependance; remove all kind of Emulation in serving the Crown; make it more dan-

dangerous to expose Faults than to commit them ; and draw Lines of Distinction between the Subjects, so as to make it impossible for any Person, however well qualified, to attain the Favour of the Prince, unless he hath some Connections with Men in Power ; and it hath also this further ill Tendency, that when Mankind find themselves under those Circumstances, they are apt to mistake the true Cause of their Sufferings, and cool in their Zeal and Loyalty even to the Sovereign.

These are the Effects which will naturally arise in any Country where the Offices are wrongly con-

stituted ; and indeed in such a Monarchy as *Great Britain*, many more Evils may arise from the same Cause, so as to put it in the Power of Men of high Rank in Office, to act with a kind of Independency in the Administration of State Affairs.

The Frame and Constitution of this Government will demonstrate the Truth of these Observations, as the Rights and Privileges of the Subjects consist principally in the Union or Harmony of the three great Powers, which form the State; and the Strength and Vigour of the Government, depend wholly upon the due Exercise of the Regal Power,

Power, which again depends not only on the due Administration of Justice in the Courts of Law, but also, in a great measure, upon a strict Adherence to the antient Rules or System of the great Offices, which, by their original Texture or Institution, were so formed, as to bring every Matter of Consequence to the View of the Crown.

But if thro' Time, Incidents, or Causes of a mix'd Nature, the Cheques and Restraints on those who preside in the great Offices are loosened or removed, and that Men in Power apprehend themselves to be at liberty to dispense with the Rules of their Office, the Name
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of the Sovereign may be often prostituted, in the same Manner, and from the same Motives, that Priests of several Denominations prostitute the Name of God ; to delude Mankind, and draw the Riches and Power of a Nation into their own Hands. But this can only be effected by the Priests when the People are kept in Ignorance, and by Statesmen when a Veil is thrown over the Offices. For Imposture and Deceit are like the Mole which doth a great deal of Mischief, but then it is only while it works under Cover and in the Dark, for as soon as it is expos'd to Day-light, it is rendered incapable of doing any further Hurt.

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The Power or Privilege claimed by King *James* and *Charles* the First, *viz.* That they were accountable to none but God, might do what they pleased, and were free from the Laws, so estranged and turned the Hearts of their Subjects against them and their Successors, and gave the People, in general, such a Distaste and Abhorrence to the very Name of Prerogative, that even, until this Day, many are prejudiced against the Name, and look upon it as an Engine of Government, from which they rather apprehend Danger than hope for Protection. However, the Efforts that were then made to extend the

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Prerogative beyond the Limits prescribed by the Constitution, being public and open, put the Subjects upon their Guard, and drew them into Action, so as to defend their Rights and Privileges. But secret or concealed Evasions always have a different Tendency, and must operate in a different Manner, especially as Craft invades all the Intercourses of Men, puts on a flattering Aspect, promises rich Harvests, and yet blasts the Corn in the Ear, which must always be the Case when Men in Power prefer private Interest to the Good of the Public.

But

But to leave the Comparison, and resume the Subject, the *English* Monarchy hath been often reckon'd to resemble a Community united under and directed by by one superior Intelligence, concurring with all their Powers and Faculties in one and the same Act. Nevertheless, the Difuse of the Powers inherent in the Crown, may in time extinguish the Notion or Idea of that Right, and leave those who act as Delegates of the Regal Power, at liberty to dispense with the due Course of Business, which from the Nature of Things, and the Tendency of evil Habits in the Offices, may be the Means of in-

introducing a kind of Oligarchy in
 the Administration of State Affairs,
 than which, nothing can be more
 fatal to the Subject, or more to be
 dreaded in a mixed Monarchy. For
 although the Subjects being go-
 verned by their own Laws, parti-
 cularly as to the Security of their
 Persons and private Estates, is a
 very great Blessing, and what can-
 not be too much valued ; yet when
 considered as a Nation, this alone
 cannot compleat their Happiness,
 or render them secure against many
 Acts of Power at home, or against
 the Incroachments of powerful
 Neighbours abroad.

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In this Light the due Exercise of the Prerogative, and the Security of the Subjects, depend principally upon making the Crown the Center, to which all Matters relative to the Offices ought ultimately to resort, and that all those who preside therein, and have the Direction or Superintendency of them, be considered as under an indispensable Necessity of acting agreeable to Law, Justice, and the King's Warrant, so as not to assume a dispensing Power, or in any manner act merely of their own Will.

In which Sense only the Crown can be protected from Surprise, or

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enabled to restrain those in Trust and Office, who if left at liberty to act without any regular Check or certain Controul, have it in their Power (although not at present in their Inclination) to create a distinct and opposite Interest to that of the Crown and Subject, even so far as to introduce all those Evils which are the natural Consequences of Anarchy and Confusion.

A late Writer justly observes, that where Principles are wanting, Consistency must naturally be wanting, and where there is no Consistency, we must not expect either Dignity or Importance; on the contrary, the Conduct of such

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a Community will be fluctuating
 always, will be absurd often, and
 which, in the End, must render
 them as low and contemptible in
 the Eyes of their Neighbours, as
 ever they had been great or emi-
 nent. But may not the same Ef-
 fects arise from different Causes,
 may not those in Power be endow-
 ed, in a private Light, with many
 commendable Qualities, and yet
 from the Indisposition or Consti-
 tutional Disorder of the Offices,
 be liable to infinite Absurdities
 and Contradictions in the Whole
 of their public Proceedings? As
 conceiv'd, they may, from the Ten-
 dency of the Offices which often
 operates as forcibly on those who

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preside therein, as the Frame,
 Temper, and Disposition of the
 Body influences the Mind or Fa-
 culties of Men ; therefore if the
 Offices are capable of producing
 such direful Effects, how careful
 ought we to be in distinguishing
 between the Man and the Office,
 lest we are found to act upon wrong
 Principles, and to apply Remedies
 not suited to the Nature of the
 Disease ; for if the Grievances
 complained of arise principally
 from the Alterations which have
 been formerly made, in the Course
 of proceeding in the great Offices,
 let who will be employed, they
 must either fall in with the Views
 and Passions of other Men, or else,
 like

like the great *Sully*, undertake to reform the Offices

But as Men of great Distinction, high Rank, or profound Learning, are, in their several Spheres, too much elevated minutely to observe the common Transactions of Life, and the System of the public Offices, upon the Knowledge of which much depends, it may be of great use to the Public to take a View of what was in former Times, and what is now, the Course of proceeding in the great Offices; thereby to discover how they may be made to operate, so as to have an universal or general Effect on the whole Frame and Constitution

tution of the Government of this Kingdom.

Order is the true Parent of Success, and in this Light all wise Governments will use their utmost Efforts, to prevent the least Change or Alteration being made in their System; for by admitting Innovations and a summary Course of proceeding in the great Offices, History, and the Experience of all Ages, shew, that under such Circumstances, the Partiality of Men disguise all Things, especially as Temptation, and Infirmary, are always too near us, and that Men often err without Observation when
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their Actions have no proper Re-
straint by Law.

It is far from the Intention of
this, or any future Treatise on this
Subject, to reflect, or in the least
insinuate any thing to the Preju-
dice of Men in Power, or even in
the most distant manner, to hint
that they entertain any Design of
deviating from their Duty to the
Crown, or to the Public. But
only to demonstrate that if it is
found, on Examination, that the
Course of the Offices have been so
altered as not to bring every Mat-
ter of Importance to the View of the
Crown, and that the Suitors of the
Crown may be barred from all Ac-

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cess to his Majesty ; under such a Situation of Things, the Head may, in many Respects, be separated from the Body Politic, which, of Consequence, must introduce a new Principle into the Constitution, and this may through Time and many Causes of a mix'd Nature, operate to the Ruin of this Nation, although nothing from without any way contribute towards such a fatal Effect : A Storm is not always necessary to sink a Ship, one treacherous Leak may do it in the greatest Calm.

It is an established Maxim, that whatever Things have Order, the same have Unity of Design. Now
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in like manner the Body is not a Parcel of loose incoherent Members without Connection or Dependence, but a System of various Parts, mutually related and subservient to each other ; so the Body Politic consists of divers Parts or Powers, which, by mutual Relations and proper Subordinations are, or ought to be, formed into a regular Constitution. And as Health and Sickness, Life and Death, depend on a Circulation of the Blood being well or ill established, so likewise the Strength and Vigour of the Body Politic, depend principally on the regular, free, and uninterrupted Circulation of Business through the Channels of the

public Offices. As it is Unity of Design, or the uniform Prosecution of Business, by the means of a Multiplicity of different Parts, all conspiring together, which enables Kingdoms or States to execute Designs of Importance ; so by this we can best discern, how far they are able to exert their Power, either as Friends, or Enemies.

Therefore as there are now many interesting Affairs depending with *France*, relating to our foreign Settlements, it may be of great use to us, to examine into the Conduct and Proceedings of their Council or Board of Commerce, so as to enable us to judge of their
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Strength, Policy, and Connections;
and in several other Respects it
may be of use to treat on that Sub-
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own Course of Proceeding in our
Council, or Board of Trade.

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But although the Matters above
hinted at are of great Moment and
public Concern, yet it may be ne-
cessary, previous to such Enquiry,
to know the Disposition of the
Public, so as to be informed, how
far this may be a fit Time to enter
into a Disquisition of this Nature.

Therefore to collect the Sense of
the Public on this Head, it is pro-
per to mention the Heads of the
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several Matters proposed to be treated of in the following Discourses, *viz.*

Observations on the *French* Politics and Government, with respect to their Course of proceeding in their great Offices.

The Motives which induced LEWIS XIV. to constitute a Board of Commerce, and the Plan upon which the said Board is constituted; and also the Checks and Restraints the Governors and other Officers are liable to in the Discharge of their respective Duties, with a general View of their Commerce.

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The Designs of the *French* in forming Connections with the *Indians*, and in extending their Territories in *America*, with some further Observations in relation to the general Plan of Power which they are endeavouring to establish.

And, in the next Place, it is intended to take a View of the *English* Colonies in *America*, with respect to their Settlements and different Models of Government.

The Plan, or System of our Council or Board of Trade, as constituted in 1696; and of several other Regulations with re-

spect to our Colonies, and to his Majesty's Governors and other Officers of the Crown there.

The Alterations which have been made in the said System or Plan of Government; and also the Abuses which have crept into the Offices in *America*; and, as much depends on the Secretary of State's manner of signifying the King's Pleasure, to treat briefly on that Subject.

The Appointment of an Auditor and Receivers of his Majesty's Revenues in the Colonies; with several other Observations in relation to the Nature and Duty of the said Offices; and from what
Causes

Causes the said Appointments have not had the desired Effect.

To shew that the *English* Colonies are not so united, as to form any regular Plan for their own Defence, when attacked by the *French* and *Indians*; which Defect can only be redressed by the Wisdom of the Legislature.

The great Importance of our Colonies, as it relates to our Trade and Navigation.

And, lastly, to offer several Proposals for redressing the Grievances complained of in the Course of this Essay.

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And

And having treated fully in the former Discourses of the System of the *French* Board of Commerce, and our Board of Trade, and other Matters relative to *America*; it is conceived, that it may be of great use to take a View of the Original System or Plan of proceeding in our other great Boards at home, *viz.*

To treat briefly of the Powers lodged in the Lord High Treasurer, Deputy-Treasurer, and Chancellor of the Exchequer.

To take a View of the Departments of several of the principal
Officers

Officers of the Exchequer, from the Reign of King HENRY VII. until the Revolution ; namely, of the Auditors of the Imprest, the Auditors of the Exchequer, and the King's and Treasurer's Remembrancers ; and as the said Remembrancers are a proper and useful Check upon the Accomptants, and most of the other Officers belonging to the said Court, it may be proper to treat fully on that Head. And next to treat briefly of the present Course of proceeding in the Treasury and Exchequer, in relation to our home and foreign Revenues, and the Connections the said Treasury-Board hath with the

the Admiralty and other great Offices.

To offer a short State of the various Regulations which have been made in his Majesty's Privy-Council, for upwards of 120 Years; to point out the great Benefits and Advantages resulting from them; and as nothing can shew the Wisdom of any System better, than to point out the Inconvenience which naturally arises from the Disuse of of them, to make several Remarks thereon.

And, lastly, to observe, that as all executive Power ought to centre in the Crown, as flowing original-

ly from that Fountain, if the Checks or Restraints on those in Office, which have been wisely constituted by our Ancestors, are lessened or removed, we may, under such a Predicament, pursue the Form, and yet give a new Principle or Spirit of Action to the Government, which through Time, Incidents, and a great Variety of Causes, may leave us destitute of all Resource.

F I N I S.